

Vodafone New Zealand Cultural Celebration

Recognising that New Zealand's Chinese population is set to grow by more than 80 per cent over the next eight years, digital connectivity company Vodafone is making sure it is prepared for the future.

Vodafone New Zealand employs 2,700 people throughout New Zealand from more than 100 different ethnicities, speaking over 60 different languages. Nearly 40 per cent were born overseas or had parents that were.

Vodafone's cultural initiatives for Chinese are significant. They include:

- Vochi, the Vodafone Chinese Network for staff, which has about 90 members, including Vodafone's Finance Director John Tomblason as Vochi's Executive Sponsor
- Red Connect, a wraparound service designed for Chinese Kiwi customers, that combines a dedicated contact centre with Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking staff, Chinese speakers in eight key Vodafone stores, and an official Vodafone WeChat account in Chinese
- An inaugural Cultural Intelligence Tick cultural diversity and intelligence with the Super Diversity Centre
- An external partnership with New Zealand Asian Leaders, an organisation dedicated to developing and profiling top Asian leaders in New Zealand.



The Vochi network has been one of the initiatives with the biggest impact. The group's mission is to build a strong Chinese community within Vodafone that brings all people together.

Vochi president and one of the group's four founders Ben Li explains what the organisation means to Chinese employees. "Lots of the team are new to New Zealand and so they come here without their immediate families. Part of the reason Vochi was formed was to create a strong network inside Vodafone, so that even our families can connect with each other.

In the past six years Vochi has held many social events including lunch groups, Christmas BBQs and family days.

In February 2018, as part of Chinese New Year celebrations, Vochi organised a week of Chinese culture celebrations across Aotearoa. Highlights included decorating major Vodafone offices and Red Connect retail stores with traditional Chinese New Year decorations, giving away customised Vodafone Red Pockets with lucky draw competitions and delicious dumplings, and organising traditional Chinese music, calligraphy and Tai Chi performances.

"It's quite a special thing to be part of and know that it comes from your workplace. On a personal note, Vochi enables me to meet new people within Vodafone and build my network even further, including to those who are not Chinese," Ben says.

There are business benefits too.

“We also help each other to be successful, as Vochi members are from right across the business so if you need to find something out for your customer, you have an extra network of colleagues that you can get help from. I guess you could say this is really important in Chinese culture, which values success and high performance,” Ben says.

Vodafone’s Chinese-speaking contact centre was launched in 2016, as part of the Red Connect service. It serves around 150 customers daily, Monday to Saturday from 8.30am to 6pm.



Vodafone deliberately incorporated flexibility into its recruitment process as it searched for skills that focused on technical ability, language fluency and business knowledge.

The call for Mandarin speakers to join the newly created team was well received by the Chinese community, as well as Vodafone staff who were promoting the role among their networks.

The opportunity to contribute to the recruitment process made Vodafone’s Chinese team members feel as though they were contributing to a greater cause, according to Contact Centre Manager Phil Unsworth. “The impact for our team to be part of Red Connect was really special. Yes, they work for Vodafone but at the same time they also felt that they were working for their community,” he says

Red Connect has had a positive impact on the business.

Some customers have given feedback that they have brought their business back to Vodafone because the company knows how to “speak their language”, says Diversity and Inclusion Lead Kirstin Te Wao “It is essentially offering not only a useful commercial proposition but also a way to create external inclusion and strengthen the connection between our people and our customers.

The team is seen as very high performing within the organisation, with zero attrition since it was established. Sick leave is less than one percent and approximately 40 per cent of the Red Connect team have been cross-skilled in mobile and fixed services support. “First time fix” rates to customer queries are 71 per cent in Red Connect, which demonstrates excellent customer service.

“We believe that Red Connect is a great example of culturalizing business and Vochi is an excellent example of workforce diversity. But when they work together, it is a unique demonstration of how organisations can successfully live the value that diversity and inclusion is good for business, and the right thing to do.”

Vodafone’s Chinese initiatives sit alongside Te Pū Whero, Vodafone’s Māori leadership network established in 2012; Te Hā Whero, the Vodafone Kapa Haka team, established in 2001; and the Pasifika Collective, the Pasifika Network established in 2015.

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